



Courtesy of visual information

Two members of the 400th Missile Squadron salute a 400th Missile Squadron Missileer as he approaches the gate of Papa 1 Missile Alert Facility in Albin, Wyo.



Courtesy of visual information

Tech. Sgt. Jeffrey Doctor, 400th Missile Squadron, verifies the steps in his technical order at a Peacekeeper missile alert facility.

Warren says farewell to Peacekeeper

Senior Airman Lauren Hasinger
90th Space Wing Public Affairs

The era of the Peacekeeper Intercontinental Ballistic Missile, often credited with ending the Cold War, is coming to a close Sept. 19 with the final phase of the deactivation.

The deactivation began October 2002 after President George W. Bush set a plan in motion in 2001 to reduce the country's missile forces from 6,000 to between 1,700 and 2,200. Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed to follow a similar plan.

The Peacekeeper is the most powerful, most accurate missile ever deployed, according to Lt. Col. David Bliesner, 400th Missile Squadron commander.

Capable of carrying up to 10 independently targeted warheads, the Peacekeeper missile was designed to strengthen the ground-based strategic policy of the United States.

The development of the missile system began in 1979. In 1988, the Peacekeeper became fully operational with 50 missiles deployed to Warren.

Each missile was built at a cost of about \$70 million. The deactivation is estimated to save the Air Force more than \$600 million through 2010.

"There are certainly conflicting emotions associated with deactivation of Peacekeeper and the 400th Missile Squadron. Thinking about it on a national and global level, anytime we can reduce the number of nuclear weapons in the world, it is certainly the best thing to do, said

Colonel Bliesner.

Airmen from the 90th Missile Maintenance Group spend about 17 days deactivating each missile, while security forces ensure the security of the removal.

Senior Master Sgt. Steven Levin, 90th Maintenance Operation Squadron training flight supervisor, has worked with the Peacekeeper since 1986 when he helped put up the first Peacekeeper site. Since then he has worked as a Peacekeeper guidance technician, team chief, quality assurance, and was most recently in charge of the Peacekeeper deactivation office which developed the Phase 1 deactivation plan in 2002.

"When we brought it on line it was very exciting," said Sergeant Levin. "It has served its purpose and completed its mission."

After the deactivation is complete, missileers with the 400 MS will be either retrained as Minuteman III crewmembers or reassigned to other parts of the Air Force.

"There is a sense of nostalgia seeing something so powerful go away," said Capt. Carrie Owens, 400 MS missileer. "We are all so proud of it."

"We've spent a lot of our time here [in the missile field]," said Capt. Lee Taylor, 400 MS missileer. "There's a lot of pride that goes into this job."

The final deactivation, scheduled for September, brings an end to the Peacekeeper's more than 16-year history at Warren.

"We're proud of what we've done," said Sergeant Levin. "It's time to move on. The mission is complete."



Photo by 2nd Lt. Josh Edwards

Senior Airman Sarah Holznagel, 90th Missile Maintenance Squadron, secures explosive ordnance on a Peacekeeper missile.

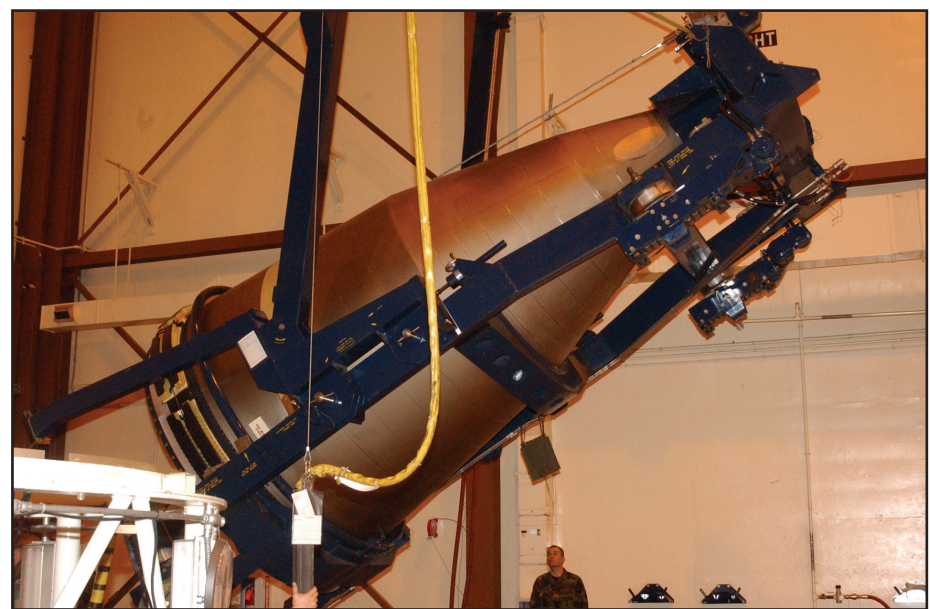


Photo by 2nd Lt. Josh Edwards